

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCCT-01 OPR-01 A-01 SY-04 OC-01 CCO-00

NIC-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-01 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 EB-04 LAB-01 SIL-01 AID-05 PC-01 DRC-01

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R 181650Z OCT 74 ZFG
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4552
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 6804

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, PGOV
SUBJ: RECENT TERRORIST ACTIVITY IN LA PAZ

REF: LA PAZ 6607

1. ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL STATEMENTS OF THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT, THE RECENT UPSURGE OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY IN THE COUNTRY BEGAN WITH THE BOMBING OF THE JOHN F. KENNEDY STATUE IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF OCTOBER 8. AN EARLIER ACT, NOT DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO TERRORISTS, WAS THE PAINTING OF CITY WALLS WITH THE SLOGANS "GRUPO ALLENDE", "ELN" AND "MIR" ON THE NIGHT OF OCTOBER 6. PERSONS IMPLICATED IN BOTH OF THESE ACTIONS WERE SUBSEQUENTLY APPREHENDED BY THE POLICE, TOGETHER WITH A QUANTITY OF EXPLOSIVES, ARMS AND LEFTIST PROPAGANDA MATERIALS. THE BOMBING OF THE KENNEDY STATUE WAS SPECIFICALLY ATTRIBUTED TO LEFTIST ELEMENTS OPERATING
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OUT OF ARGENTINA, HEADED BY EXILED MAJOR RUBEN SANCHEZ.

ALTHOUGH NO FURTHER ARRESTS HAVE BEEN REPORTED, THE FOLLOWING INCIDENTS HAVE OCCURED IN SUBSEQUENT DAYS: (1) DISCOVERY OF AT LEAST THREE AUTOMOBILES LOADED WITH DYNAMITE CHARGES, ONE OF WHICH WAS PARKED IN FRONT OF THE COLEGIO MILITAR; (2) EXPLOSION OF A BOMB NEAR THE SAID FACTORY, RESULTING IN INJURIES TO THE CHIEF OF THE POLICE BOMB SQUAD, CAPTAIN BERNAL; (3) A BREAK-IN AT THE HOUSE OF MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE AYOROA, IN WHICH HIS SERVANT WAS TIED UP BY THE INTRUDERS AND THREATS WERE MADE TO KIDNAP HIS CHILDREN; (4) AN ANONYMOUS NOTESENT TO AYOROA'S HOME, WARNING HIM TO LEAVE BOLIVIA BY EARLY NOVEMBER OR SUFFER THE FATE OF CHILEAN GENERAL CARLOS PRATS WHO WAS RECENTLY KILLED IN BUENOS AIRES; AND (5) IN THE LATEST INCIDENT, A SMALL EXPLOSIVE CHARGE WENT OFF IN A HEATER AT THE NATIONAL LOTTERY ON OCTOBER 14, SLIGHTLY INJURING SEVERAL EMPLOYEES IN AN ADJACENT OFFICE.

2. A NUMBER OF WELL-INFORMED BOLIVIANS HAVE TOLD THE EMBASSY IN RECENT DAYS THAT THE TERRORIST CAMPAIGN IS A FABRICATION OF THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT. THESE SOURCES, WHO RANGE FROM OPPOSITION POLITICAL FIGURES TO PERSONS OCCUPYING RESPONSIBLE POSTS WITHIN THE BANZER GOVERNMENT, GIVE SEVERAL REASONS FOR THEIR SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE OFFICIAL VERSION OF THE CURRENT TERRORIST CAMPAIGN: (1) BOLIVIAN GUERILLA AND TERRORIST GROUPS WERE DECIMATED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S SECURITY FORCES IN 1971 AND 1972; SINCE THOSE YEARS, THEY HAVE SHOWN LITTLE CAPABILITY TO REGROUP AND STAGE A CONCENTRATED TERRORIST CAMPAIGN OF THE KIND ALLEGEDLY OCCURING AT PRESENT; (2) IT IS ALSO UNLIKELY THAT THE GOB'S SECURITY FORCES WOULD HAVE SUDDENLY LOST THE HIGH DEGREE OF EFFICIENCY WHICH HAS KEPT THE EXTREME LEFT OFF BALANCE, WEAK AND DISORGANIZED SINCE 1972; (3) IN ALL PREVIOUS GUERILLA AND TERRORIST CAMPAIGNS IN BOLIVIA, THE LEFTISTS "TOOK CREDIT" FOR THEIR DEEDS BY LEAVING PAINTED SLOGANS AND LEAFLETS AT THE SCENE, AS WELL AS BY INFORMING THE PRESS AND RADIO OF THEIR ACTIONS; THE RECENT CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN ANONYMOUS TO DATE, AND NO EXILED LEFTIST GROUP HAS CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT; (4) IT IS DIFFICULT TO VERIFY IF MANY OF THE ALLEGED INCIDENTS, SUCH AS THE DISCOVERY OF DYNAMITE IN THE PARKED CARS AND THE THREATS TO COLONEL AYOROA, ACTUALLY TOOK PLACE; IF THEY DID OCCUR, THEY COULD AS EASILY HAVE BEEN FAKED BY THE GOVERNMENT AS CARRIED OUT BY LEFTIST EXTREMISTS. PERSONS WHO HOLD THIS

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VIEW OF THE RECENT TERRORIST ACTIONS IN LA PAZ ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT ONE OF THE TWO FOLLOWING REASONS IS MOTIVATING ELEMENTS OF THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT TO STAGE THE TERRORIST CAMPAIGN AT THIS TIME; (1) A DESIRE TO SOLIDIFY POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT THROUGH A DIFFICULT PERIOD OF OPPOSITION POLITICAL AGITATION AND LABOR UNREST, PRIOR TO THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE ELECTORAL STATUTE, A POLITPCAL PARTIES LAW AND OTHER NEW LEGISLATION IN DECEMBER;

(2) A DESIRE BY THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, CERTAIN SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS AND SOME OF THE PRESIDENT'S CIVILIAN ADVISORS TO PROMOTE A CLIMATE OF OPINION IN WHICH THE 1975 ELECTIONS CAN BE POSTPONED INDEFINITELY; THE PERSONS INVOLVED IN SUCH A PLAN WOULD BE ITS CHIEF BENEFICIARIES, SINCE THEY STAND TO LOSE THEIR PRESENT POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY UNDER ANY SUCCESSOR GOVERNMENT. THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR ALREADY HAS PUBLICLY EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THE ELECTORAL PROCESS COULD BE JEOPARDIZED BY CONTINUING TERRORIST ACTIONS.

3. COMMENT: AT THE MOMENT, IT IS TOO EARLY TO MAKE A RELIABLE JUDGEMENT ON THE TWO CONFLICTING VERSIONS OF THE TERRORIST SITUATION NOTED ABOVE. IN OUR VIEW, THE GOVERNMENT'S VERSION OF THESE EVENTS CARRIES THE WEIGHT OF A CONSIDERABLE BODY OF PHYSICAL EVIDENCE. IN ADDITION, IT IS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT ELEMENTS OF THE GOB COULD BE SO CYNICAL AS TO INJURE THEIR OWN PEOPLE (CAPTAIN BERNAL, THE NATIONAL LOTTERY EMPLOYEES) IN PURSUIT OF SUCH NARROWLY POLITICAL GOALS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE COUNTER-THEORY DESCRIBED BY NUMEROUS EMBASSY SOURCES ALSO IS SUPPORTED BY SEVERAL ARGUMENTS WHICH MERIT CONSIDERATION. WE ARE INFORMED THAT ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL MOTIVATIONS FOR A STRONG STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE PRO-GOVERNMENT FALANGE PARTY ON OCTOBER 15, CALLING ON THE GOB TO CONTINUE WITH ITS ELECTORAL TIMETABLE DESPITE THE OUTBURST OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY, WAS CONCERN IN THE FSB THAT ELEMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT ARE SEEKING AN EXCUSE TO POSTPONE THE 1975 ELECTIONS. IN ANY EVENT, THE TERRORIST PROBLEM WILL PROBABLY BECOME AN INCREASINGLY STRONG FOCUS FOR POLITICAL DEBATE IN COMING WEEKS, CENTERING ABOUT THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE BANZER GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO TRANSFER POWER TO A NEW ADMINISTRATION IN AUGUST 1975.
STEDMAN

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